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SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO AND AF/RSA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/03/2019

TAGS: PREL AU SU CD

SUBJECT: AU SUMMIT: AF ACTING A/S CARTER MEETS WITH AU  
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: On January 30, AF Acting Assistant Secretary Phillip Carter met with African Union Deputy Commissioner Erastus Mwencha. Mwencha expressed enthusiasm for the incoming Obama Administration and sketched ambitious plans for the AU Commission, while Carter encouraged his interlocutor to focus on putting into place good policies as a pre-condition for new foreign assistance flows. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Referring to the election of President Obama, Mwencha said he saluted the people of America as champions of democracy and said that his election gave hope to millions of young Africans. He explained that the AU is embarked on a grand experiment to try to integrate Africa. Currently, the Commission is at work on its second strategic plan, which is based on four pillars: peace and security, development, shared values, and capacity building. He complained about the difficulty of keeping talented personnel at the AU, saying that the best are frequently lured away by higher salaries at the United Nations, other international organization, or the private sector.

¶3. (C) Carter said that the new Administration will continue to do what it can to support our partners, and said the USG values highly its relationship with the AU. Nevertheless, referring to the world economic crisis, this will be a challenging year. He said that the USG would like to see greater democracy, greater accountability, and better governance not only in African countries but in the AU itself. In a time of relatively scarce resources, he noted that the USG is looking to see positive actions -- and results -- precede new resource flows. We have to be able to show that our assistance is having an effect. We also need to be able to show to the American people that assistance is not open-ended: there has to be a clear trajectory and an end point where assistance is no longer needed. Mwencha said he understood, and agreed.

¶4. (C) Carter went on to congratulate the AU for the principled stand it has taken on the military coups in Mauritania and Guinea. He said that until only recently we thought that the era of coups in Africa was over, but there is a danger that these coups will be the start of a new trend and that the AU needs to keep together in its rejection of coups and extra-constitutional means of changing government. Carter and Mwencha also decried the scourge of the narcotics trade, particularly in West Africa, and noted the undermining effect this trade has had on Latin American and Caribbean democracies. Mwencha said he looked forward to working with the new Administration and will be planning another trip to

the United States in the near future.

¶5. (C) Comment: Mwencha is an intelligent, capable person who is overseeing a very ambitious agenda at the AU. If he and his colleagues can manage expectations about their own plans as well as the USG's ability to help, it could result in a fruitful, mutually beneficial relationship. End Comment.

¶6. (U) Acting A/S Carter reviewed a copy of this message before departing post.

YAMAMOTO